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ADDRESS

of

MAJ.-GEN. JOHN A. DIX,

AT THE

RECEPTION

BY THE

SEVENTH REGIMENT, NATIONAL GUARD, S. N. Y.,

OF ITS

MEMBERS WHO HAVE SERVED

IN THE

Army and Haby of the United States

4/

DURING THE

GREAT REBELLION.



ACADEMY OF MUSIC, JANUARY 31, 1866.

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General Dix, having been introduced by Colonel Clarke to the assembled guests, addressed them as follows:

Ladies and Gentlemen: It affords me great pleasure to perform the service just announced to you by the Colonel of the Seventh Regiment of the National Guard of the State of New York—to reiterate his welcome to those of the former members of the regiment who have gone forth during the late war, under other organizations, to defend the government of their country against a gigantic combination to overthrow and destroy it. This reunion of those, who in the past have been bound together by the ties of a common association, has its familiar analogies in the incidents of domestic life. As when the heads of a household, after the lapse of years, reassemble their scattered children who have gone out into the battle of life, to congratulate them on the successes they have achieved and the reputation they have acquired, and to thank them for sustaining and advancing by meritorious actions the family name and renown. In like manner the Seventh Regiment reunites its former associates, to congratulate them on the distinction they have gained for themselves, and to thank them for the honor which the lustre of their services has reflected upon the corps and the country. Having had most of those who were members of the organization at the commencement of the war, and of those to whom this reception is tendered, under my command, I feel that my duty to-night will be best performed by addressing all as members of a common brotherhood, and by briefly recounting the valuable aid they have rendered in standing by the country during the ordeal of fire through which it has triumphantly passed. And first, gentlemen, let me congratulate you on your good fortune in living at a period in our history marked by the most extraordinary domestic conflict of this or any other age. I say your good fortune, for whenever a community is menaced by the greatest of all calamities—the destruction of its nationality—it must be the most earnest desire of every good citizen to participate in the danger, to do what he can to avert it, and to contribute by toil and endurance and self-sacrifice to mitigate its effects. You stand in this honorable relation to the country. you who have not been in the field during the entire war, have in repeated instances volunteered your services to uphold the national standard, which, by the blessing of Providence, still waves over us, the hallowed emblem of the authority of the Union, with no dimness on its folds excepting that which it has gathered from the smoke of honorable and successful battle.

At the outbreak of the rebellion, when the Sixth Massachusetts Regiment was attacked at Baltimore, and the deepest concern was felt for the safety of the capital, you were among the first to hurry to the scene of action. A gentleman high in position at Washington gave me, two or three years ago, an account of the condition of things there at the time of your Open communication with the North had been entirely suspended; railroad travel and the transportation of the mails through the State of Maryland had been broken up by force; and no intelligence could be obtained from the loyal portions of the Union except through secret messengers and couriers, whose journeys were always performed with difficulty, and sometimes not without absolute danger. At this juncture, when all was uncertainty and doubt, when each revolving hour came freighted with some new burden of anxiety or peril, a column of armed men, with bayonets glittering in the sunlight, was seen entering the Pennsylvania Avenue, near the Capitol; and the feeling of relief and security was unspeakable when the welcome intelligence spread throughout the city, as if by some magnetic influence, that the Seventh New York had come to oppose to the gathering cohorts of treason the ægis of its discipline and its name.

In the early spring of 1862, when the Army of the Potomac was lying before Richmond, when Washington and Baltimore and the adjacent country were almost denuded of troops, and there were well-grounded apprehensions of a rebel raid from the Valley of the Shenandoah, you volunteered your services a second time. I was in command at Baltimore when you arrived there with your gallant companions, the Twentysecond, the Thirty-seventh, the Sixty-ninth, the Seventy-first, and, I believe, some other New York regiments whose numbers I cannot at this moment recollect. You were detained at Baltimore by the Government at my special request; and during a large portion of this term of your service you occupied the post of honor—Federal Hill—that remarkable promontory rising up in the heart of the city, and seeming to be placed there by nature as a site for a citadel. When you occupied it, it was crowned by a fort, as you see it before you (pointing to a painting representing it), built in the summer of 1861, to protect the city from external attack, and, in case of need, to defend it against itself. Happily, the unshaken loyalty of the Baltimoreans, through all trials and temptations, rendered the latter service unnecessary.

In the summer of 1863, when Gen. Lee invaded the State of Maryland with a powerful army, you volunteered your services a third time, and were assigned by the Government to the defence of the city of Baltimore, on which an attack was considered imminent. During a portion of this third term of service you were again in the occupation of Fort Federal Hill, and during the residue on duty in the interior of Maryland, remaining in the field until after Gen. Lee had retreated beyond the Potomac. You were then suddenly recalled here to aid in quelling the riots, and your reappearance had a powerful influence in restoring order and in saving the city from further devastation.

In the summer of 1864, when rebel raiders from Canada were plundering our frontier, you tendered your services to me as commanding officer of this department; and they would have been accepted had not some new regiments, which had never been in the field, claimed the privilege of serving the

country. Most fortunate and enviable is the community in which the emulation of its citizens is not to evade military duty, but to be received into the public service and to be assigned to posts of danger! Giving you all the praise which is most eminently your due for your promptitude, your patriotic spirit, and your alacrity on all occasions in accepting and courting military service, yet the crowning distinction of your regiment is in the large number of officers which you have furnished for other organizations. I hold in my hand a roll of five hundred and fifty-seven of your members, who received commissions in the army, the navy, or the volunteer service. Nine-tenths of the number were serving with the regiment when the war broke out. Three rose to the rank of majorgeneral, nineteen to the rank of brigadier-general, twenty-nine to the rank of colonel, and forty-six to the rank of lieutenantcolonel. Many whose names are on this roll of honor are sleeping in soldiers' graves. Others are moving about with mutilated limbs and with frames scarred by honorable wounds, the silent but expressive memorials of faithful and heroic service. For years before the war you devoted yourselves with an assiduity and a zeal worthy of all commendation to martial exercises, and I believe I may safely say that there was scarcely a man in your ranks who was not capable of leading other men-of commanding a platoon, a company, a battalion, or a regiment. And the gratifying result is, that under nearly every battle-flag which the State of New York unfurled, you had an honored representative. The historian Justin, in his account of the preparations of Alexander the Great for his Asiatic expedition, says that some of the corps he organized were so well disciplined that one would have considered them not so much soldiers as the chosen leaders of soldiers;

"Non tam milites quam magistros militiæ electos putares."

You have fairly earned the same praise, and are justly entitled to the honorable appellation of militiæ magistri—the leaders of soldiers! I do not know so striking an illustration of the truth of a maxim which is usually considered of modern origin, but which is as old as the Augustan era, when it was

proclaimed by the most graceful of the poets of imperial Rome, in that pure Latinity for which he was so distinguished—

" In pace, ut sapiens, aptarit idonea bello;"

which may be liberally interpreted: "In peace, if you are wise, you will prepare for war." To have furnished the most remarkable proof of the profound wisdom of this ancient maxim, is a distinction to be remembered with gratitude by your fellow-citizens and to be cherished with a manly pride by yourselves.

It is now nearly ten months since the trial of arms between the North and the South was brought to a termination; and I trust it will not be deemed inappropriate if I present to you, who have borne so conspicuous a part in it, some considerations arising out of this still absorbing subject. I do not intend in what I say to strike a single note of discord. I should greatly regret to speak one word which should not be in harmony with the scheme of reconciliation now in progress between the two sections of the Union. The views I desire to state are purely philosophical, applicable to all ages and all nations, and drawn from the sober lessons of experience, which no community can wisely disregard. It was in the month of April last that the war was brought to a close by a sudden collapse of the whole vital power of the insurgent States. No equal period of time in the history of any people has ever been so crowded with extraordinary events. During the very first days of the month were fought those remarkable battles before Petersburg, equally honorable to the genius and skill of the commander and to the gallantry and steadiness of his troops. The evacuation of Richmond immediately followed. A few days later General Lee surrendered, with the remains of the Army of Virginia, the first and the last hope of the rebellion. And here I desire to say that I consider this result, and such, I believe, will be the judgment of posterity, as the direct consequence of one of the most remarkable movements in history—the great march from the Wilderness to the Chickahominy, the James and the Appomattox—army opposed to army, one pursuing and the other pursued, a conflict at every

step, not one square mile of territory traversed by the combatants which was not crimsoned with heroic blood! unconquerable perseverance, the unwavering persistence, with which one single purpose was pursued—through the memorable march and the patient investment which followed it—prepared and compelled the surrender of the most numerous and best disciplined army the insurgents ever brought into the field. I do not, of course, lose sight of the subsidiary movements, which were parts of the grand and comprehensive plan of the General-in-Chief. Near the middle of the month (on the 14th), the old flag was hoisted over the battlements of Fort Sumter—the same flag against which the first rebel missile was hurled! And on the evening of the same day was enacted that darkest deed of infamy which has ever disfigured the annals of the United States—the assassination of our noblehearted and lamented President. I have no comment to make on this act of horror. No language of reprobation or abhorrence can illustrate or intensify its atrocity. It is one of those great crimes which, in the history of our race, occur only after intervals of centuries; crimes which the recording angel sheds no tear to blot out; crimes which are written down in the great chronicle of events in characters of blood as a perpetual memento of the madness and the malignity of which human passion is capable. Near the close of the month General Johnston surrendered with his army, comprehending in the capitulation the whole rebel force north of the Chattahoochie. embracing, in fact, nearly the whole organized military power of the rebellion, and thus terminated the war.

These events are becoming rapidly incorporated into the solid substance of our history, and mankind will pass a calm and impartial judgment upon them. It is very difficult for any of us, while they are so fresh in our remembrance, to speak of them with becoming moderation and disinterestedness. But although we may not be the most impartial judges of a conflict which has brought with it so much skill in leadership, so much heroic courage and still more heroic endurance in all ranks of our combatants, both by land and sea, and so much patriotic effort and cheerful self-sacrifice on the part of the

great body of our people, yet it has taught us some lessons which it may not be unbecoming in us to refer to, and which it may be useful for all the generations of men now and hereafter to reflect upon. They are not new lessons; on the contrary, they have been taught over and over again to those who have gone before us, and have always been forgotten when the events with which they were connected have faded away in the distance, and the attention of men has become engrossed by new and more urgent interests.

First of these is the great truth that the course of military successes is always from North to South-from frosts and snow to flowers and sunshine. Our very instincts teach us that it must be so, and all history confirms it. It is not because the Sonthern nature is less spirited, or less capable of high and heroic achievement; but because the Northern muscle, elaborated under a colder sky and through more invigorating influences of climate, acquires more compactness, tenacity, and strength, carrying with it (for the mental and physical conditions always assimilate) a greater moral power of endurance. Southern races are, for the most part, precipitate, impassioned, fiery, vehement, sometimes breaking down all opposition by force of their resistless impetuosity. Northern races, on the other hand, are calm, deliberate, persistent, determined, and as immovable as a rock, against which wind and storm are idly expending their fury. The remark may seem fanciful, and yet I believe it to be historically true, that great military successes, considered in reference to parallels of latitude, are subject to a law analogous to that which governs currents of running water. They do not rise above the level of their source, or if carried to a greater height by some special force they subside to their former level as soon as that force is with-Accordingly we find that the great tides of conquest in all ages have flowed from north to south or east and west on nearly the same parallels of latitude. It required the extraordinary genius of Julius Cesar, the most finished military commander, perhaps, that ever lived, to carry the victorious arms of Rome, when the great republic was in the fullness of its prosperity and power, a few degrees of latitude north of the

metropolitan centre. And yet we all remember that it was more than a hundred years after his first invasion of the little island of Great Britain before it was reduced to the condition of a Roman province. Even then only the lower part was subdued, and the Emperor Adrian was compelled to build a wall across it to protect the Roman soldiery from the incursions of the Caledonians, the predecessors of the Scotchmen of our day. Now I venture to say, that if that island had been fifteen or twenty degrees further South, it would not have resisted the Roman power successfully through a single campaign. The operations of Hannibal in Italy may seem to conflict with my theory, but not if they are properly considered. It is true he marched up through Spain, crossed the Alps, descended into Italy, and obtained several signal victories over the Romans. But his operations did not contain one of the elements of permanent conquest. They were nothing but a protracted raid; and after a few years he was compelled to return to Carthage to defend that city against the very people whom he was invading. There was a remarkable instance eight or nine centuries later of the truth of the proposition I have stated. Some six hundred years after the Christian era -when mankind, as if in defiance of the celestial messages of the Great Teacher, had sunk into a moral torpor as dangerous to all the interests of civilization as the living paganism which had preceded it-God raised up an avenger in Mahomet to destroy all that deserved to perish, and to rouse to action all that was worthy of being preserved. The ereed of the Prophet was full of error, but it contained one vital truth, and under its influence his followers were roused to a wild enthusiasm which nothing could resist. It was in the name of the one and the ever-living God that their cimeters flashed to the light! The great tide of Islamism poured down through Western Asia into Africa, across Egypt and the Desert of Barca, whelming the ancient Pentapolis, over the narrow strait which separates Africa from Europe, sweeping across the sunny plains of Andalusia and over the vine-elad hills of Grenada, until the great wave burst at the base of the mountains of Asturias. It did not rise in the West above the level

of its source in the East. And thus this great human deluge, impelled by the spirit of conquest and religious frenzy, bearing on its crest the trophies of Eastern science and art, was poured out over Western Europe, and planted there some of the richest germs of civilization, to be purified and perfected in after ages by the clearer light of Christianity.

Wherever armies have gone to the North for the purpose of conquest, they have been defeated. The Greeks and Romans were constantly repulsed by the rude nations north of them. The legions of Varus were cut to pieces in the wilds of Germania by Arminius and his followers. Nay, the great modern conquerer of Europe, when he undertook—if I may so express myself—a campaign against the Arctic Circle, with one of the most numerous and best disciplined armies the world ever saw embodied, was discomfited-not so much, it is true, by the arms as by the strategy of his enemies, and by the rigors of the climate. His immense host, like that of Xerxes, was broken to pieces, and he was compelled to retreat, leaving thousands of his followers sleeping in bloodless death upon the frozen plains of Muscovy. On the other hand, when great conquering armies have been sent to the south, they have nearly always been victorious. The Romans overran everything south of them down to the shores of the great African desert—one of those seas of sand which are far more impracticable than any waste of waters. Romans, in their turn, were overrun by the barbarous nations north of them. The Goths, the Normans, the multinomial races which were swarming century after century out of the great northern hive, overwhelmed all Europe down to the very shores of the Mediterranean; and even Southern Italy saw these rude warriors, with frames compacted almost to the hardness of iron by hyperborean frosts, unbuckling their armor and lying down in the summer radiance on the heights of Sorrento, by the blue waters of Baiæ, and even in the classic grotto of Pausilipo. In like manner armed multitudes from Central and Western Europe poured down into Syria under the unconquerable banner of the cross, and wrested the Holy Sepulchre from the hands of its infidel possessors. The flaming cimeter of the fiery Saladin, as described in Walter Scott's Crusaders, falling in fast but ineffectual blows on the massive battle-axe of the cool Plantagenet, is but a type of what the world has seen and will continue to the end of time to see, in the conflicts of southern with northern races.

I wish some of our Canadian friends were here to take comfort from these suggestions. When the rebel raiders, whom they were harboring, crossed our frontier to plunder our villages, shoot down our unarmed people and give this city to the flames, through a scheme of incendiarism which for atrocity has no parallel in the annals of barbarism; and when a certain Department commander, whose name I will not mention, with a frontier of nearly a thousand miles to guard, with only six military posts along its whole extent, and without two hundred men in any one of them, gave orders to the commanders of these slender garrisons, in case the depredations were repeated, to pursue and capture the maranders, even if it were necessary to cross the astronomical line which constitutes the boundary between the two countries—the stout hearts of our northern neighbors need not have been disturbed by any imaginary apprehension of invasion. No, gentlemen; whenever the tide of emigration, the only instrument of conquest the United States employ when unprovoked, shall rise again in the East, it will move on across our own territory to Nebraska, Colorado, Idaho, Nevada, Montana, California, Oregon, and the ealmer shores of the Pacific. Or, if it should deviate from our own parallels of latitude, it will not be in the direction of Hudson's Bay and the coast of Labrador, where the bosom of our mother earth is hidden from the sight of her children during more than half their natural lives, but down into the sunny districts of the palmetto, where the reproductive powers of nature are at work throughout the whole circle of the year, and where the magnolia and the orange tree load the atmosphere with perpetual fragrance. I know that the mental and muscular energy of the North will gradually give way, in obedience to the universal law, to the amenities and the seductions of the climate; but not until they shall have done their work by waking up those soporific districts to the

new life and the intense activities of this earnest and enter-

prising age.

Another lesson which this war has taught is, that human slavery, in some way or other, and at some stage or other of its existence, is always calamitous to those who maintain it. The justice of God is sure to manifest itself, in some form of retribution, against the injustice of man, even though it be through the slow operation of what we call natural causes. Wherever the subjugated class does all the work and the governing class does none, wherever the latter seeks to evade the universal sentence of earning our bread in the sweat of our faces, the former must acquire a physical superiority, which, in the end, is sure to work out its own deliverance. We have not waited for this tardy process of centuries. Slavery with us has perished through the insensate attempt of the masters to extend and perpetuate it by destroying their own government. It has gone down amid the clash of arms and the shock of battle; and the amendment to the Constitution just adopted has confirmed and executed what the behests of war had decreed. This great social revolution has been accompanied by an equally great marvel. Slavery has been abolished in Delaware and Kentucky by the votes of Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina; and those who were most earnest in defending and seeking to extend it, have "conquered their prejudices," and are marching on, with the great army of emancipators throughout the world, to the majestic minstrelsy of universal freedom!

These are two of the great lessons of this war. As I have already said, they are not new, but they have been brought out of the darkness by the throes of contending populations—thrown off, if I may so express myself, like flashes of light from the great mirror of history. But these old lessons are not the only ones this war has taught. It has illustrated a new truth of far greater value than any political moral which can be drawn from the annals of the past. It has demonstrated beyond contradiction that the strongest of all governments in times of great peril is that of a republic. It cannot well be otherwise, notwithstanding all we have heard from

monarchists of the weakness of republican institutions. The great mass of the people are a part of the government. The governing administration is always the work of their own hands. Through the principle of popular representation, their wishes and opinions are impressed on every movement it makes, and on every measure it adopts. They feel that the destruction of the government would involve the loss of all that is most dear to them—their domestic security and peace, their property, and, above all, the political status they hold in the great scheme of self-government. The ability of such a government to defend itself against foreign aggression is only to be measured by the aggregate physical force of the whole community. In times of internal disorder, throwing the insurgent district out of the account, its power is the same. Under arbitrary systems, the rights of the government are distinct from and antagonistic to those of the people. Whenever the government is in danger, those who live under it and who consider themselves debarred of their just rights, are very apt to think that if it goes down, their own condition will be no worse, and may perchance be ameliorated. The ability of such a government to defend itself is limited, apart from the aristocratic classes, to so much of the physical power of the community as it can bring into its service by force. Out of these radical distinctions has sprung up the feeling of hostility to our political system which has existed from its foundation among the friends of monarchical institutions. They have desired to see the experiment of self-government on this continent fail, in order to strengthen arbitrary government in other quarters of the globe. And yet the nations of Europe, with two exceptions, have maintained a strict neutrality in this contest. They would have been most unwise, as well as unjust, if they had not. For centuries the secondary governments of Europe have been struggling, sometimes by separate action, and sometimes in combination, to enlarge the circle of neutral rights, and to restrict the rights of belligerents. In their course towards us, therefore, they have acted in accordance with a long-established policy in which they have a vital interest. But I do not place their conduct on this

motive. I believe they have acted in obedience to a conscientious sense of duty. France and Great Britain, on the other hand, our rivals on the ocean, had, or thought they had, an interest in the destruction of this Union outweighing all prudential considerations. There is no doubt that Louis Napoleon did all in his power to induce Great Britain to unite with him in recognizing the independence of the insurgent States. He availed himself of our internal disturbances to overthrow republicanism in Mexico, our nearest neighbor, and to set up a monarchy on its ruins, with a sovereign dependent upon himself. Yet, as the inferior of Great Britain on the ocean, he did not altogether disregard his obligations of neutrality; and when our Minister complained to him that vessels were fitting out in his ports to cruise against our commerce, he promptly gave orders that they should be detained. Great Britain, on the other hand, conscious of her superiority, has been as unmindful of her neutral obligations toward us as she has always been unmindful of the rights of neutrals in others when she has been a belligerent. She permitted vessels to be built in her ship-yards, equipped in her ports, and manned by her seamen, to make war upon our commerce, and she has allowed them to depart against the most urgent remonstrances of our ministers, under the most frivolous pretexts. Her cruisers, sailing under the rebel flag, have literally swept our commerce from the ocean. Nay, more. For two years the armies of the insurgents were kept in the field through supplies of arms, ammunition, and clothing, from her workshops. I believe it no exaggeration to say that she has cost us one hundred and fifty thousand lives, and added fifteen hundred millions to our national debt. Gentlemen, I am one of those who believe that these wrongs must be redressed. I do not object to the postponement of our reclamations until our internal tranquillity shall be fully assured; nor do I despair when a better spirit shall prevail in the councils of Great Britain of seeing our just claims acknowledged and disposed of by amicable negotiation. In the meantime we have this great consolation. The very aid which France and Great Britain, two of the most powerful nations of Europe, have given to the insurgent cause, has only rendered our triumph the more marked; and it may be that this prestige of success in a republic may react upon both those countries, and lead to a thorough reorganization of their social and political We have reason to believe that the people of both, notwithstanding the bad faith of their governments, were on our side. The Liberal party in England, under Cobden, Bright, Goldwin Smith, and others, openly declared themselves in our favor. For this reason, if there were no other, it would be our most earnest wish that the struggle which is going on in both countries between the many and the fewthe many for the assertion of their just rights, and the few for the maintenance of their usurpations—should have their issue in a popular triumph. We do not interfere with the domestic concerns of European States. But nothing would be more gratifying to the American people than to see the whole brood of aristocratic non-producers, of whom the mythical "Dundreary" is the type, compelled to go to work and earn their bread by manual or intellectual labor.

I would have been glad to refer briefly to some other topics—to have spoken some words in praise of the zealous efforts of our able and patriotic President to restore good feeling between the different sections of the Union—something in regard to the reorganization of the system of labor in the Southern States on its new basis, a subject deeply concerning our prosperity as well as theirs. But the time allotted to me in the proceedings of the evening is drawing rapidly to a close; and I know, for I have been young myself, that there are many youthful hearts which are beating with impatience for the commencement of the festivities. I will, therefore, trespass for a single moment only on your kind indulgence.

From the era of the rebellion we take, as it were, a new departure in the progress of our political system. Old and disturbing issues have been settled and should be buried out of sight. Slavery is abolished; and henceforth the soil of the North American continent is never to be pressed by a servile foot. The right of secession is exploded, and it is now settled that this Union is never to be dissolved excepting by the vol-

untary action and concurrence of a majority of all the parties to the fundamental compact; and if attempts are made from within or without to break it up by force, it is by force to be The doctrine of State sovereignty, which has been brooding over us for three-quarters of a century like some ill-defined portent of evil, has vanished as a disturbing dream; and it is now understood, if not conceded, that the reserved rights of the States-rights which should be vigilantly guarded and resolutely maintained by themselves, and scrupulously respected by the Federal Government—are but rights of exclusive jurisdiction; and that sovereignty, one and indivisible, is the attribute of the central power alone. But this is too large a question to be discussed on an occasion like this-almost too large to be stated, however careful the form of words, without subjecting him who states it to the danger of misapprehension.

With this readjustment of our social and political relations, and after this triumphant exertion of our power of self-preservation, new responsibilities devolve on us. We must enjoy with greater moderation the blessings and privileges which Providence has vouchsafed to us. We must exert our power, if possible, with increased forbearance, even for the assertion of our undeniable rights. We must practice toward all with whom we have relations, whether within or without the pale of our political system, the most strict and impartial justice. Since the days of the Revolution, when our fathers were led through seven years of toil, and suffering, and peril, almost as manifestly by the hand of God as the children of Israel were led through the wilderness, we never have been so significantly admonished of our dependence on Him, or have had so much eause to be grateful for our deliverance from surrounding evils. This sense of dependence, and this feeling of gratitude, must never be permitted to fade out of our minds or hearts. altars of our religion and our freedom must stand side by side. that their fires may ascend in one common flame to Heaven. Then shall we have reason to trust that the blessing of God, which has been with us and our fathers under so many trials, will continue with us to the end in our new career of prosperity and power.









